

disgust and dismay with our Nation's policy in Iraq. And I want to thank Bart Aceocella, who has helped me with my many, many words calling on the President of the United States to bring our troops home.

Forty-nine months after this failed Iraq policy was launched, we are still being told, Be patient. Progress is just around the corner. All of our sacrifices will somehow be worth it. But all that amounts to nothing more than desperate spin. And the American people aren't buying it; neither, apparently, are some top military brass. The administration can't find someone to take the job of war czar, a job that would coordinate the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the recruits for the job, retired Marine General Jack Sheehan, told The Washington Post last week that he would rather spare himself the ulcer, saying of the Bush administration, "The very fundamental issue is they don't know where the hell they're going."

How can the administration possibly say that Iraq is on the road to freedom and stability when a bomb goes off inside the Green Zone and kills members of the elected Parliament? If it's not safe inside the fortress of the Green Zone, just imagine what it is like in the streets of Baghdad.

How can the administration say progress is being made when the Associated Press reports that dozens of Iraqi police officers were demonstrating outside their Baghdad station chanting, "No, no to America. Get out, occupiers." And now American soldiers can look forward to a few more months of trying valiantly, but in vain, to carry out this misguided mission, as the Pentagon has announced that soldiers' 1-year tours will be extended to 15 months.

I ask my colleagues who gave the President the authority to invade Iraq 4½ years ago if they weren't surprised that they voted for an occupation with no apparent end in sight. They absolutely didn't intend for our troops to be caught in the middle of a civil war that our very presence as occupiers has inspired. Four and a half years later, over 3,300 Americans who will never make it home to their families, and all at the cost of more than \$375 billion to stop Saddam Hussein from using weapons of mass destruction that he didn't have.

This week, Americans sent their 2006 tax returns to the IRS, trusting that our government will send that money back to us in the form of services, benefits, stability and security. So what do we tell them? What do we tell the American people about the staggering costs they are being asked to assume for the occupation of Iraq? Can anyone possibly argue that we have somehow gotten a return on this reckless investment?

The National Priorities Project has broken down the Iraq financial burden, assuming a total of \$456 billion once the latest supplemental is signed by

the President. Here is what it boils down to: \$4,100 for every American household; \$1,500 for every man, woman and child; \$275 million a day; \$11 million every hour. Look what we could do with that kind of money: \$928 million, 3 days in Iraq is enough to build 100 schools or 5,400 affordable housing units, or provide health care for 144,000 children for the length of the Iraq war.

And if national security is what you want to redirect the money toward, we could have used Iraq appropriations for more secure posts, for energy independence initiatives, for nuclear non-proliferation programs, for debt relief in the underprivileged areas of the world. We could have invested in real national security.

Mr. Speaker, we have sacrificed more than enough in lives, in treasure, in national stature and credibility for a mistaken ideological pipe dream.

It is time for our leaders to hear the frustration of the American people, frustration with this shameful, wasteful, futile policy. It is time to end this occupation. It is time to bring our troops home.

THE RUTGERS WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, the women's basketball team of Rutgers University had a great season going to the finals. And as one of two Members of Congress who represents Rutgers University here in Congress, I would like to pay tribute to them, not just for their athletic ability.

After the season was over, they were the subject of hateful, crude and insulting comments; and they responded with restraint, with eloquence and dignity. They were classy. These athletes and Coach Stringer distinguished themselves after the season even more than they did during their extraordinary season. And they serve as a reminder of what college athletics is all about, or should be. We hold up college athletics not for the entertainment of alumni and fans, but because we believe athletic participation builds character. These women of the Rutgers basketball team showed that they have character.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFazio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCarthy) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MCCarthy of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will

appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. KUCINICH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DEMOCRATIC BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise on behalf of the 43 Member strong fiscally conservative Democratic Blue Dog Coalition. We are a group of fiscally conservative Democrats that are committed to restoring common sense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government.

As you walk the Halls of Congress, Mr. Speaker, it is easy to know when you are walking by the office of a fellow Blue Dog Member because you will see this poster that says "The Blue Dog Coalition." It says, "Today, the U.S. national debt is, 8,887,793,986,597.86." And for every man, woman and child in America, their share of the national debt is \$29,465. It is what we refer to as the "debt tax." And that is one tax that cannot be cut, that cannot go away until this Nation gets its fiscal house in order. The Federal deficit continues to climb.

Mr. Speaker, it is hard now to think back and realize, but from 1998 through 2001, this country had a balanced budget; and yet under the Republican leadership for the previous 6 years, we have seen them rubber-stamp the President's budget year after year after year, giving us the largest deficit after the largest deficit after the largest deficit, record deficits. And as a result of that, we have seen the national debt grow to where it is today, approaching \$9 trillion.

Why does this matter? It matters because the total national debt from 1789 to 2000 was \$5.67 trillion, but by 2010, the total national debt will have increased to \$10.88 trillion. This is a doubling of the 211-year debt in just 10 years. Interest payments on this debt are one of the fastest growing parts of the Federal budget. And the debt tax is one that cannot be repealed. Deficits reduce economic growth. They burden our children and grandchildren with liabilities. They increase our reliance on foreign lenders who own some 40 percent of our debt.

This chart here, Mr. Speaker, graphically depicts why the American people should be concerned about the fact that our country is nearly \$9 trillion in debt. You see, our Nation spends a half a billion dollars a day, give or take a